

18.(amended) A DNA expression vector which comprises a cDNA molecule according to claim 1.

20.(amended) A vector according to claim 18 which comprises a sequence encoding a reporter molecule.

21.(amended) A host cell transformed or transfected with the vector according to claim 18.

23.(amended) A host cell according to claim 21 which is a COS cell.

24.(amended) A transgenic cell, tissue or organism comprising a transgene capable of expressing a protein according to claim 10.

25.(amended) A transgenic cell, tissue or organism comprising a transgene capable of expressing a human NAALAD-ase L protein having an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence illustrated in Figure 1 or a functional equivalent or derivative thereof wherein said transgene comprises a vector according to claim 18.

26.(amended) A cDNA or nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1, or a functional equivalent thereof, for use as a medicament.

27.(amended) Use of a cDNA or nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1, or a functional fragment thereof, in the preparation of a medicament in the treatment of neural diseases including Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, ALS, Parkinson's disease, peripheral neuropathy, Huntingdon's disease, acute brain injury, multiple sclerosis, exposure to neurotoxins, peripheral nerve trauma, ischaemia or dementia.

28.(amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a nucleic acid or cDNA molecule according to claims 1 together with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, diluent or excipient therefor.

29.(amended) A method of determining whether a compound is an inhibitor or an enhancer of activity of a NAALAD-ase protein according to claim 10 which method comprises contacting said compound with NAALAD-ase protein in the presence of [³ H] N-acetyl-L-aspartyl-L-glutamate (NAAG), and monitoring for the extent of hydrolysis NAAG compared to a control of said NAALAD-ase and NAAG which is not contacted with said compound.

30.(amended) A compound identifiable as an inhibitor or enhancer of NAALAD-ase activity according to claim 29.

34.(amended) A method of identifying a compound which is an inhibitor or an enhancer of expression or activity of a NAALAD-ase protein according to claim 10 which method comprises contacting a host cell, tissue or organism expressing said protein with a compound to be tested and monitoring the expression or activity of said protein compared to a control which comprises said cell expressing said protein but which has not been contacted with said compound.

35.(amended) A method according to claim 34 wherein said NAALAD-ase expressing cell comprises a host cell transformed or transfected with a DNA expression vector which comprises a cDNA molecule encoding a human NAALAD-ase L protein having the amino acid sequence illustrated in figure 1 or a functional equivalent, derivative or bioprecursor thereof.

37.(amended) A compound identifiable as an inhibitor or an enhancer of expression or activity according to the methods of claim 34.

43.(amended) A method according to claim 41 wherein said substrate comprises [³H] NAAG and said enzyme comprises a NAALAD-ase enzyme.

44.(amended) A method according to claim 41 wherein said enzyme comprises a human NAALAD-ase L protein having an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence illustrated in Figure 1 or a functional equivalent or derivative thereof.